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Notes on Village Government in Japan After 1600, I.—

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Introduction.

IN the year 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu, through his victory at the battle of Sekigahara, became the virtual ruler of feudal Japan, and proceeded to elaborate that careful system of government which, with remarkably few changes, continued to exercise an undisputed sway over the nation till the middle of the nineteenth century. In this system culminated, and with it ended, the feudal régime of Japan. Each of the larger phases of the system,—its relation to the Emperor and civil nobility, to religious institutions, and to the military, agricultural, and mercantile classes of society, and its moral, intellectual, economic and institutional contributions to the present era of Japanese history,—presents a field of fruitful study. It is the aim of this essay to analyze some of the leading features of the rural aspects of the great system.

Generally considered, the main objects of this system can hardly be said to have been entirely selfish. Coming after nearly three centuries of continual civil war, Ieyasu was as eager to restore at last the peace and order for which the nation had long yearned, as to perpetuate the political power of his own family. It was in fact the primary motive of his policy that the power of his house should depend upon the stability of the realm¹. It may indeed be said that every important phase of the political system which he built was so designed as to subserve this double purpose.

It is this full consciousness of its aims that characterizes the Tokugawa régime and distinguishes it from its predecessors in the history of feudal Japan. Ieyasu and his councillors would run no risk and leave nothing to nature, wherever their human intelligence guided them. They made every effort to

avail themselves of the wisdom to be derived from the study of the past political experience of both Japan and China², and sought to adapt it to the peculiar conditions prevailing in the feudal Japan of the early seventeenth century,³ always with the steadfast purpose of insuring peace and of perpetuating the new régime.

The general system so framed was characterized, in all its phases, by a studied balance of two elements seemingly contradictory to each other, namely, government by rigid laws and government by discretion. The historian who sees only the former, in which an elaborate machinery was set in motion, as it were, regardlessly of the men operating it, would be puzzled to meet everywhere almost an excess of liberty that was left for the exercise of the personal sense of equity and proportion of the individual administrator. Nor would one succeed in regarding the latter element the only basic principle of the Tokugawa rule. It would seem that largely by a harmony of the two, the one not less important than the other, was served the primary aim of Ieyasu's government.

1. Government by rigid laws, which one might term institutionalism, may be conveniently discussed as in the following analysis. In the first place, a Chinese political idea was used to explain and emphasize the actual division of social classes. The nation was conceived as falling into two main classes, rulers and ruled, with a broad division of labor between them: the rulers to govern and in return to be supported, and the ruled to support and in return to be governed.⁴ True to the feudal nature of the society, the rulers were mostly warriors,⁵ and the ruled were mostly tillers of the soil. The separation between the noble functions of the former and the ignoble services of the latter was distinct and decisive, each class living a separate life from the other, with its own laws, education, taste and views of life.⁶ Less than two millions of the fighting class were thus superimposed upon more than twenty-four millions of the producing class.⁷

In the second place, let it be noted that in each of the two classes, and in their mutual relationship, there had developed in the course of previous history an ill-defined but important division of sub-classes, which the Tokugawa rulers now organized in a minute and rigid gradation of rank. To enumerate but a few of the chief steps in the hierarchy, such

as concern the subject of this essay. The Suzerain⁸ appointed about forty Intendants⁹ with regular salaries over his own Domain Lands.¹⁰ He also received allegiance of more than two hundred large and small Barons,¹¹ who, with some of their vassals, ruled over their respective Fiefs.¹⁰ The suzerain's domain lands were assessed as equivalent to about a fourth of the aggregate of the fiefs of all the barons.¹⁰ His intendants stood in their respective districts in immediate relation with representatives of the peasants, but the barons and their larger land-holding vassals were removed from the rural population under them by one or more intermediate grades of officials,¹² whom we might conveniently designate Bailiffs.

The peasants of each Village^{13 & 14} were themselves divided into classes, according to their tenures.¹⁵ They, however, were all under their Village-Head,¹⁶ usually one but sometimes more, either elected or hereditary, and, holding office annually, for a term of years, or for life. He was assisted by several Chiefs,¹⁶ and was, with the latter, under the counsel and supervision of one or more selected Elders.¹⁶ In larger fiefs there frequently were District-Heads, who, being also of the peasant birth, each discharged in a group of villages functions similar to those of the heads of individual villages.¹⁷

In the third place, all these grades were held together by a carefully studied system of checks and balances. These were evidently conceived in accordance with the two familiar principles that have characterized many a bureaucratic government in history, and were especially developed in China,¹⁸ namely, the principles of responsibility and of delegation,—the delegation of the suzerain's powers to his subordinate officials, and the responsibility of each functionary for his official conduct to those above him. Each official was inviolable,¹⁹ so long as he acted within the powers delegated to him, and each law was sacred,²⁰ so long as it embodied the just will of the highest authorities. Every person, however high, was answerable for his act to his superiors, and the suzerain's punishment for wrongs committed by even the greatest baron was swift and was witnessed by all men under him.²¹ It was very common that the officials or even all the members of a corporate body were punished for a grave offence committed by one of the latter, or otherwise held responsible for the due performance of public duties enjoined on them. This was especially

the rule with rural communities, with city wards, and with merchant and artisan gilds.²² It would not be difficult to see that the double chain of delegation and responsibility was forged in order to hold the society solidly together.

2. Beside these rigorous institutional arrangements of the Tokugawa régime, the latitude it carefully and generously left to the individual administrator for the exercise of his sense of equity and right proportion is all the more remarkable by contrast. Unless the suzerain's motive of deliberately balancing these two opposite principles is thoroughly appreciated, the story of his government is apt to baffle us at every turn, and has in fact betrayed many writers into inevitable errors. Rule by discretion should be absent [in no form of government, and is likely to play a large part in a feudal government, which usually comprises arrangements essentially private and personal in origin. In the Tokugawa régime, discretionary conduct of affairs formed a predominant feature of its operation, and, what is more important, was maintained side by side with a rigid institutionalism, some phases of which we have analyzed, both elements supplementing and rectifying each other. The law was framed, or, at least, such was the ideal, with the conscious intention at the same time to guide the blind magistrate by its provisions and to allow the wise magistrate to supply them with his wisdom.²³ Once promulgated, therefore, the law was a ready instrument in the hands of benevolent and experienced rulers.²⁴ Not seldom was it expanded, bent, or even overridden, to give free play to a higher sense of equity.²⁵ This was, in short, a system of government one half of whose success depended upon the skill and the justice of the individual official, the other half being provided for by minute laws. The first half, it is easy to see, was ever liable to be turned to abuses by corrupt men, and the second always tended to become mechanical and unwieldy. The careful combination devised by the Tokugawa rulers served their aims with rare success, but failed them in the end, for, indeed, no human hand could strike an even balance and effect a complete organic union of the two factors for all time.

So much for the general system. We are now ready to devote our attention to that part of the Tokugawa régime which concerned the rural population, and observe how it

illustrates the general reflections we have made, and how its peculiar conditions reacted upon the entire system.

The peasants were a class destined, as has been said, to be ruled by warriors and in return to support them with fruits of their labor. It was first of all necessary to keep them submissive. There was no thought of ever allowing them to take part in the government of the country or even of the fief. Not only would they be incapable of the work, but it would in all probability result in breaking the very fabric of feudal society. Nor was it a difficult problem to enforce passive obedience upon the peasants, for, habitually employing dull wood and metal as tools, as they do, and depending on mute but irresistible forces of nature, the peasants are always the mildest and most patient class of people. The rank and dignity of the authorities command from them more genuine respect than from merchants in the cities. Political ideas grow but slowly among the peasants. Their mental horizon is apt to be limited to their own interests, which are at once circumscribed and protected by custom. Only when these interests, their only citadel, are unreasonably attacked, they would be seen to lose their equanimity and become as ferocious as an enraged ox. So long as their interests are safeguarded, however, peasants would be a malleable material in the hands of a wise ruler. This was especially the case with the Japanese peasants. They had for centuries been inured to passivity. They were in most instances accustomed to a gregarious mode of living in old hamlets,—a fact which tended to develop fixed social forms and sanctions and a cordial spirit of mutual dependence and assistance among themselves. It will be seen later that this tendency was promoted by the Tokugawa rulers with extreme care. Altogether, this was not a life conducive to independence of thought and action.

Obedience, however, might not be contentment. It was necessary to control the peasants in such a way as to render them, not only submissive, but also contented,—so contented, if possible, that they would counterbalance whatever unstable elements of society there existed in and out of their circle, and throw the weight of their native desire for order and conservatism in the interest of peace and of the perpetuation of the régime.

This double task was at once imperative and difficult, for the Japanese peasants of the seventeenth century were less easily contented and should therefore be appeased with all the greater solicitude, than the serfs of the thirteenth. Not only did they form the bulk of the nation, and were, from the economic standpoint, the support of the entire body politic;²⁶ not only was there a degree of community of interest between them and the warriors, as against the rising burgher class;²⁷ but also, more important than these circumstances, the peasants' position in relation to the land they tilled and to the warriors who drew revenues from the land had materially risen since the earlier period. Under the stress of the continual civil strife that raged before 1600, warriors found that they could no longer retain their rôle of seigneurs over landed estates, where they had for generations lived, in time of peace, amid their serfs, and, in time of war, defended their castles with their retainers. They were now obliged to betake themselves to the castles of the greater lords, to remain in their immediate neighbourhood, and to leave their land to be managed largely by the tillers themselves. From this time on, political conditions²⁸ accelerated the change already begun. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, most serfs had turned freer tenants, and many of the latter had become proprietors employing tenants and laborers.²⁹ A long experience had led the peasants to feel that the lord—and the lord became an impersonal being in the eyes of the peasants living on the suzerain's domain lands—cared much less for the land they tilled than for the dues levied upon it. This was in fact a fundamental point: the fiscal obligation of land, rather than the land itself, was now a controlling principle of the institutional life of the peasant. Between the lord and his land, the tilling of which he had overseen, had now stepped forth the peasant, who had formerly stood behind the land, and the lord's eye had turned perforce from the land to what the peasant should bring to him from it. The peasant had become the virtual, though not theoretical, owner³⁰ of cultivated land.³¹ This was a transitional state of things betokening a greatly advanced social position of the tiller of the soil. For although the process could not in all cases have resulted in his improved material condition, he must nevertheless under these circumstances have become more mindful of his rights and interests.

To illustrate. The lord's right of seizure over land³² had vanished, and even his right of escheat or mortmain, as the medieval jurist of Europe would call it, was very imperfect.³³ Succession by testament was common;³⁴ a collateral relative of the deceased to whom the latter had willed his holding inherited it without purchase-money ever being paid to the lord, and was, in default of a will and of a nearer relative, even compelled to do so, in order that the same dues as before would be forthcoming from the estate. As regards these dues, they were almost all levied on the productive capacity of each holding,³⁵ capitation or house taxes being 'unpopular and unimportant, a fact indicating how far was the peasant removed from personal servitude to the lord. Regulations concerning alienation of land by sale, gift, or mortgage,³⁶ and its division, were primarily actuated by the motive that the act should not affect the fiscal issues of the land.³⁷ In matters of personal rights, also, the same consideration largely prevailed. Change of residence between different parts of the country was discouraged, mainly because it might introduce elements tending to disturb the unity of village customs, and thereby conduce to unrest and a consequent fiscal derangement.³⁸ Marriage³⁹ was in no way interfered with, so long as it did not directly or indirectly tend to diminish the public revenue of the village. When, in later years of this period, the running away of impoverished peasants became frequent, the lord seldom exercised a right of pursuit,⁴⁰ provided the land deserted by the absconders was taken care of by their relatives or by the village and yielded the same dues as before.

All this points to a condition that deeply and radically affected all classes of the feudal society, and exercised a specially profound influence upon the rural policy of the period. The peasants were, indeed, still the "ruled" class, but it is easy to see that their interests called for the most scrupulous consideration of the suzerain's government. The barons, too, on their part, would court the good-will of the village population within their fiefs, for no lord could hope to wield influence for a long time over discontented peasants. The latter would often find a ready listener in the suzerain himself, who, while openly discountenancing popular riots and direct appeals, would eagerly punish the baron for maladministration and

indirectly right the wrongs of the aggrieved peasantry. Whether the suzerain or the baron, the inevitable criterion of distinguishing a good from a bad lord was the one's regard and the other's disregard for rural interests.⁴¹ And these interests could be studied only with sincere zeal and sympathy, for the peasants would not express themselves until it was too late—until their long pent-up grievances burst forth in violent mobs. The greatest stress was, therefore, laid everywhere upon the need of studying agricultural conditions and ministering to them with justice and skill.⁴² Under these circumstances, it was exceedingly difficult at once to secure from the peasants the degree of submission, and to grant them the degree of satisfaction, which were both absolutely necessary for the success of the régime. The ingenious and thorough manner in which this delicate work was generally contrived to be done by the feudal authorities is worthy of a careful study.

In the first place, the Tokugawa's village administration was an example of extreme paternalism at once kind and stern. It was here that the greatest care was taken in balancing law and equity, inflexible justice and generous discretion. The fundamental conception was that the peasant was at once too passive and too ignorant to provide for the morrow, so that his ills should receive official attention even before he himself perceived their symptoms.⁴³ It was unnecessary, and sometimes dangerous, that he should understand what the authorities were doing for him, for they were afraid that his too much knowledge might interfere with their exercise of equity and arbitrary adjustment. He "should be made to follow," as said Confucius, and as was habitually repeated by the Tokugawa rulers, "but should not be made to know".⁴⁴ The peasants, accordingly, should not be allowed to become over-wealthy, for "if they grew too rich," said a practical administrator, "they would cease to work, and employ poor warriors to till their land, and so the distinction between the classes would pass away;"⁴⁵ yet the moderate holdings of the peasants were zealously protected by law and by precept, so that they would not become too poor. They should know in general, but not in exact detail, how their lands were valued, how their taxes were remitted or reduced in hard years, and what were the finances of the entire fief or domain land.⁴⁶

Nor was the penal law given publicity among them,⁴⁷ and most legal provisions came to them in the form of moral admonitions.⁴⁸ Yet the peasants were fairly well advised as to the general nature of the rights and obligations of their own class and of the officials directly concerned with their affairs. This knowledge was further reinforced by a qualified right granted the peasants to appeal from an unjust official to the baron or intendant, and thence to the suzerain's council.⁴⁹

Much of this paternalism and this limited publicity and protection was extended to the rural population by the rulers, and was utilized by the latter, in a manner at once effective and characteristic of their general policy. Ever since the Reform of 645, the Chinese village institution known usually as *pao* or *lin* had been familiar to Japan. It consisted in dividing the inhabitants of each village into groups each comprising a certain number of house-fathers, who were held responsible for the order, the good behavior, and the performance of the political obligations of all the members of the respective groups.⁵⁰ The institution was copied in Japan after the seventh century,⁵¹ and, despite the general social changes which followed, lingered till the beginning of the seventeenth. Then the early Tokugawa government seized upon it, and forced it on the lower warrior classes and the entire village and municipal population throughout the realm.⁵² The normal group of peasants, usually termed the five-man group, consisted of five land-holding house-fathers living near together, with all their family-members, dependents, and tenants.⁵³ It was continually ordered, and the order was well carried out, that every inhabitant in the village, no matter what his status or tenure, should be incorporated into the system.⁵⁴ That this old institution should now be, as it was, so eagerly resuscitated and so universally extended, was evidently due to a belief based upon the past experience in China and Japan, that the system would enable the rulers to attain with the least possible cost and friction a large part of the aims of village administration—to secure peace and order, to afford the exact degree of control and freedom that was deemed necessary, to insure a prompt return of the taxes, to inculcate the moral principles most desirable in an agricultural society under a feudal régime, and, above all, to hold the people responsible for most of these results.

Let us observe how these things were done through this simple institution. The responsibilities and the rules of conduct of the villagers were made known to them through edicts, public sign-boards, and also oral exhortations given by the intendant or bailiff and the village-head.⁵⁵ The more important of these rules were re-iterated to the peasants with great persistence.⁵⁶ Gradually, from about the middle of the seventeenth century, the older custom of certain warrior-officials to present to their lords written pledge under oath to fulfil their orders, repeating them as nearly as was practicable in the form they had been given, was extended to the five-man group in the village with respect to its duties. By the end of the eighteenth century, there probably were few villages in Japan that did not keep their so-called group-records (*kumi-chō*).⁵⁷ The record began with an enumeration of such laws and precepts as had been repeatedly given to the villagers, and ended with an oath that those would be strictly obeyed and enforced in the village. All the house-fathers put their names and seals after the oath in the order of their groups in the village. The record was then periodically—in some instances as often as four times in the year or even once a month—read and fully explained by the village-head to all the people in his charge. As new laws were enacted, or as the village population changed, the record was revised and made anew, with the usual oath and affixed seals.⁵⁸

These laws,⁵⁹ which were thus published among the people through edicts, sign-boards and group-records, and for the execution of which the peasants were held responsible by means of the system of the five-man group, are among the important sources for the study of our subject. Attempts may be made to reconstruct the rural government under the Tokugawa upon the basis of these laws. It should be noted, however, that they were never the whole of the laws relating to village administration. As has been stated, the penal side of the laws was, except in a few rare cases, carefully concealed from the peasants, the latter being merely told what to do and what not to do.⁴⁷ Nor should it be forgotten that, even after studying penal laws from other sources, we could not be certain that all the law thus collected presented a sound basis for a discussion of the entire subject. In order to obtain a comprehensive survey of the institutional life of the village, it

would seem that one should do three more things from a vastly greater amount of materials. The laws should be interpreted in the light of the social and political conditions which called them forth. Then it should be studied how far the laws were actually enforced, how much they accomplished the result they were purported to bring about, and how they reacted upon the society. Finally, one should carefully examine if there were not certain conditions in the life of the village and of the nation that were too universal or too vital to find expression in the laws or to be materially affected by their operation.

From these points of view, it may almost be said that the first problem of the village administration under the Tokugawa, —of the paternal rule over the responsible village and the five-man group,—concerned its financial affairs, and that most of its other features were so modelled as to facilitate the collection of the taxes. Simple morals were inculcated for the sake of peace and order, and economic life was carefully regulated for the maintenance of moderate prosperity, but the peace and the prosperity subserved steady fiscal returns of the village. Nor is this strange when we consider that the peasants constituted the large class of people whose foremost part in the life of the State was to furnish the means to carry on the government of the nation. The warriors ruled the peasants, and the peasants fed the warriors and themselves. Few provisions of the laws for the village had no bearing, direct or indirect, upon the subject of taxation; few phases of the entire structure of the feudal rule and of national welfare were not deeply influenced by the solution of this fundamental problem. It is, therefore, not impossible, as we are about to do, to treat the whole subject of village government with its financial problem as its center.

If we might be allowed to anticipate a conclusion of this discussion, we should venture to say: it was probably inevitable, but it was none the less a tragic outcome of the Tokugawa régime, that, between the mounting expenses of the government and the falling or, at best, stationary productivity of the soil, the taxes should, as they did, grind upon the peasants with increasing weight, and that this fundamental malady should gradually sap the vitality, not of the nation, but of the whole system of government. It has often been said that had there

been no pressure from foreign Powers causing the downfall of the Tokugawa government in 1868, its days had then been all but numbered, and the statement seems the most tenable on the financial side of the question. That such a result was inevitable appears to have been due primarily to the fact that, from the economic standpoint, the feudal system in general was costly, and that the Japanese feudalism after 1600 was particularly wasteful.

It needs no reminder that feudalism as such would afford too inefficient an economic organization for a government whose growing budgets must be supported only by an increasing wealth of the nation. Agriculture, upon which the feudal society was built, was at the mercy of natural forces, and at its best could not support a large population. What few people subsisted therein could not hope to increase their wealth at a rapid rate or on a large scale, because they were encumbered by regulations designed to maintain rigid and stable classes of society, and by customs which frowned upon sudden departures from the settled routine of life, and because the intercommunication between the fiefs was inadequate, if not restricted. Even when it was tolerably free, its economic value was small, in proportion that money was scarce, credit undeveloped, and capital immobile. Under these conditions, both the population and the wealth of a normal feudal society would, as long as it retained its character, remain almost stationary.

It will, however, require an explanation that the economic organization of Japan under the Tokugawa was abnormally wasteful even as a feudal society. Out of the many circumstances that may be thought to have contributed to this state of things, we may introduce three at this stage of discussion, namely:—the separation of the warrior from land; an exhaustive degree of paternalism, attended by some serious errors, in the economic policy of the government; and finally, a long reign of peace breeding luxury and extravagance. The first of these conditions awaited the Tokugawa at their accession to power in 1600.

(1) Separation of arms from land. It has already been alluded to that the continual turmoil during the period of feudal anarchy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had forced many a warrior to become a professional fighter, and to leave

the country and to live near his lord's castle. The introduction of gun-powder about 1543, and the consequent progress in organized tactics, accelerated this process. A further impetus was given by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, who for political reasons forced large bodies of warriors to migrate from one place to another. During the period of civil wars, the military service of the vassal was often compensated for in money or in rice. When a baron apportioned a piece of land to his vassal, it often meant that the latter was granted the right over the dues from the land (所當の知行), instead of over the land itself (下地の知行). In this case, he was far from overseeing its cultivation in person, for he lived in his lord's castle-town.

This custom had so long been established in 1600, was so strongly reinforced by the increase of dispossessed warriors of the Osaka party in that and subsequent years, and indeed so much facilitated the control of the warrior class, that the Tokugawa found it not only impossible, but also impolitic, to return to the older system of feudal arrangement.⁶⁰

It was a natural order of things that the congregation of warriors in the castle-towns, and, as it was now required of a large number of warriors in each fief, in the assigned quarters in Edo, should tend toward a greater cost of living than before. What was more important, the separation of arms and land made the collection of taxes more indirect and expensive than in former days. It was common in the early years of the fourteenth century that a knight with his attendants on foot could be maintained on seven acres of the average rice-land. Such a condition was, however, regarded unthinkable in the Tokugawa period,⁶¹ and the difference was generally attributed⁶² to the greater cost of living and of tax-collection due to the warrior's absence from the country. It will be seen later how the otherwise expensive system of indirect collection through several grades of officials led, also, to inevitable leakage and corruption.⁶³

(2) Economic paternalism. In their zeal at once to secure rural tranquility and to insure steady returns of the taxes, the Tokugawa rulers continued throughout the period to enact and enforce minute regulations of agriculture, which must have had a benumbing effect upon the economic sense of the people. In one fief, the hereditary estate of the peasant

family was limited to between 500 and 5000 *momme* in productive value, representing probably about 1.25 to 12.5 acres of the average rice-land, and in few places in Japan estates smaller than 10 *roku* in assessed productive value, or perhaps about 2.5 acres of the same quality of land, were allowed to be divided amongst children.⁶⁴ Agriculture was encouraged with great care. The villagers should look after the fields of those who were unable to work, and all should equally share the disaster of a drought or an inundation. Subsidiary occupations, especially the production and manufacture of silk, were in many places fostered and controlled.⁶⁵ Careless cutting of bamboo and trees,⁶⁶ the raising of useless and harmful crops, including tobacco,⁶⁷ the building of new houses upon cultivated land, and a host of other actions, were forbidden on pain of joint punishment of the village or the group. Public granaries⁶⁸ were established everywhere, and the manufacture of *sake*⁶⁹ was kept within bounds.

Other occupations received perhaps more interference and certainly much less fostering care than did agriculture. The change of a peasant into a merchant was not permitted.⁷⁰ The dimensions of woven fabrics, the output of merchandise, and the scale of wages of several forms of labor, were often fixed by law, while commercial transactions at rates higher or lower than current prices were declared illegal.⁷¹ The repeated debasing of coins by the Edo government, and the unfortunate custom of allowing certain cities to issue copper coins and many fiefs to circulate paper currency,⁷² must have seriously interfered with the growth of credit and legitimate commerce, and reacted unfavorably upon the economic life of the village.

Most stringent were restrictions relating to communication. There were many barriers at strategic points on the approaches to Edo, and, besides, minor passes impeded travel between and even within fiefs.⁷³ Indeed, the very village could be considered a barrier in itself, for no unknown character should find in it even a night's lodging, it being illicit even for a hotel to keep an unaccompanied stranger for more than one night. Nor should the peasant go out of the village to pass a night elsewhere without an explicit understanding with village officials. There is reason to believe that the regulations of communication were enforced with a large measure of success.⁷⁴

It would be unjust, however, not to appreciate the probable motives which had compelled the authorities to issue these paternal measures of economic control. The prosperity of the warrior and the peasant depending on the success of the rice harvest, their interests were, especially in bad years, largely common, but antagonistic to that of the rice merchant.²⁷ If, in years of rich crops, the peasant rejoiced and the warrior suffered, for the latter's income in rice would sell cheap, even then the merchant, who bought the grains at a low price, pleased neither the one nor the other. It was considered essential for the officials to insure the steady, mild prosperity of the farmers, and, at the same time, to prevent the merchants from profiting at the expense of the rulers and the bulk of the ruled. Few things were more dreaded as a dissolvent force of social organisation, than the passing of the control of the economic life of the nation from the warrior to the merchant.^{74a} It is an important phase of the history of this period, which falls beyond the scope of this paper, that this perilous situation steadily grew up despite all the effort of the feudal government to arrest its progress. The presentiment felt by the authorities of this impending crisis is reflected in the nervous zeal with which they continually issued strict economic measures, some of which have been described.

(3) *Peace and luxury.* It would be difficult to gage the evils of so extreme a form of economic paternalism, for, immense as they must have been, they were largely negative. Flagrant, positive evils resulted from the long period of peace lasting for more than two and a half centuries,—the golden peace for the creation of which the founders of the Tokugawa régime had exhausted their wisdom, with so large a degree of success, and which enabled the brilliant civilisation of the Edo period to rise.

We have space enough merely to allude to the enormous expenses which the peace policy of the suzerain entailed upon all the barons throughout Japan. The baron's own income, after deducting from it the emoluments for his retainers, was seldom large, and yet he had to bear sundry expenses very onerous in proportion to his means, and, besides, render his regular, though seemingly voluntary, dues to the suzerain. Other occasional requisitions from the latter for special purposes were a source of continual embarrassment to the baron.

Many a baron was thus obliged to borrow heavily from his vassals, who could rarely expect reimbursement. Unfortunately, when the circumstances of the baron and the vassals became more straitened, their luxurious habits had advanced too far to be checked, much less to be eradicated. What had greatly tended to bring about this condition was the fact that each baron was obliged to pay his annual visit to the suzerain's court at Edo with his full retinue, and to maintain two establishments worthy of his rank, one at the Capital and the other at his castle-town. Edo was the fountain-head of luxury and extravagance, and its fashions were through this system of continual communication quickly diffused into all the chief centers of culture. There was little doubt that the system helped the prosperity of the Capital and of the towns on the high roads, but at the expense of the warriors and peasants. It was the suzerain's policy to impoverish the barons, and it was the barons' part to replenish their coffers from the peasants. The periodic absence of the baron and some of his vassals at Edo had also resulted in many a case in conspiracy or corruption among the retainers in the fief, which again bore heavily upon the tax-paying class.⁷⁵

In the meantime, the suzerain's own finances at Edo, despite the great care with which the fiscal administration of his domain lands through his intendants was supervised, showed deficits that swelled as the luxury of his court progressed. They were barely balanced by the seigniorage derived from an increasing adulteration of the gold and silver currency.⁷² Many of the suzerain's immediate vassals residing at Edo were plunged into abject poverty.⁷⁶

Nor should it be forgotten that there was something radically anomalous in the very idea of a perpetual tranquillity of a feudal society—an "armed peace," or, peace of an agricultural community guarded exclusively by a warrior class which did neither fight nor produce. All the numerous sumptuary laws⁷⁷ enacted during this period for the warrior classes could not check the growth of luxury and extravagance of the unproductive and unoccupied men of arms. Indeed, sumptuary laws in a society where one class produces at best a fixed amount of wealth, and the other spends it on an increasing scale, are highly significant. Here they are always necessary and always ineffective.

All these evils were greatly intensified by the luxurious habits that had seized upon the peasants themselves. Before we discuss the effects of peace and luxury upon the economic life of the village, let us first observe how the peace itself had been secured therein.

Here, again, the paternalism of the government was, for evident reasons, hardly less exhaustive than in other matters of village administration. The family institutions—marriage, adoption, succession, and inheritance—were well guarded and controlled. The group and the entire village were made to be actively interested in the peace and in the maintenance of each household.⁷⁸ The peasants should watch and correct one another's conduct,⁷⁹ and disputes should as far as possible be adjusted by mutual conciliation.⁸⁰ Private expulsion of an unruly member was rarely permitted,⁸¹ while sales of persons were illegal.⁸² Virtues which were inculcated among the villagers, and for the practice of many of which they were made responsible, were: filial piety, concord within the family, diligence, patience, obedience, charity, and mutual helpfulness in the hamlet.⁸³ It was a common duty of the village to provide necessary measures for preventing and extinguishing fires, and arresting robbers and disorderly persons.⁸⁴ Most heinous were riots of all kinds; for the mobbing of an intendant's office, for example, not only were the culpable parties beheaded, but also the village-officials were fined, deprived of land-holdings, or banished.⁸⁵ Peasants were strictly forbidden to own fire-arms or to carry swords.⁸⁶ It has already been shown that no one might without permission lodge a stranger or himself stay out of the village even for one night.⁷⁴ All the servants hired into the village had personal sureties responsible for their good behavior.⁸⁷ Catholic converts were excluded most rigorously.⁸⁸ Dealings in smuggled foreign wares were forbidden.⁸⁹ No books interdicted by the censor were to be admitted,⁹⁰ while the study of Confucian classics by the peasants was discouraged.⁶ Festivals should not be celebrated on a larger than the usual scale, and no novel religious sects or practices should be initiated. The Buddhist church, whose rights were very narrowly circumscribed, was utilized as an agent of peace and contentment.⁹¹ It is not possible to enumerate other details of the careful measures which were provided for the purpose of maintaining the unity of village customs and population.

It is more important to know that not only did these measures successfully insure the social stability for which they were intended, but the effects they produced contained evils which could not have been entirely foreseen, but which, once grown, no new laws could eradicate. The artificial, dead peace, together with the debased currency of the period, had continually tended to breed luxury even among the toiling population of the village, and, furthermore, luxury did often so operate as to reduce the productive capacity of the peasant family. The logic of this serious condition is clearly shown in an outspoken memorial⁹² written in 1790 by a man in the Sendai fief who was familiar with rural conditions of the period and strove to improve them.

"Formerly", says he in one passage of this interesting document, "when the farmer could bring up two, three, four or five sons, all the younger sons were hired out by other farmers as soon as they were old enough, saved their wages, and married or were adopted into families. There was everywhere an abundant supply of cheap labor for the field. The farmers could also keep horses, which yielded manure. The productive power of the soil was therefore large, and rice was plentiful. They could likewise afford daughters. Marriage was inexpensive, the population increased at the normal rate, and the Heavenly Law was fulfilled." But now, continues the writer, marriages cost the man nearly 30 *kwan* and the woman's family almost 40. It being increasingly hard to maintain a household, the average peasant seldom had more than three children, and the poorer tenant only one child. Labor was scarce and dear, having risen from 5 or 6 *kwan* to more than 10, and rising every year. Horses were fewer, and manure less. It being in many instances impossible to take care of one's own holding, it was rented to some one else who seemed willing to till it, but who would be inclined to neglect the land that was not his own. In recent years most land yielded on the average only 15 to 16 *koku* per *chō* (74.5 to 79.5 bushels per 2.45 acres), instead of the former average of 20 (nearly 100 bushels). Yet the peasants understood little the cause of their trouble, and did not abate their thoughtless extravagance.

It is true that this document speaks of conditions in a particular fief, but, while some districts fared better, there

were others whose lot was still worse.⁹³ The universal and persistent enactment of sumptuary regulations for the rural population⁹⁴ has led some writers to fancy that the Japanese peasants must have been a model of frugality, but it is another evidence of the prevailing trend for needless luxury and the increasing difficulty of checking it. The village life under the Tokugawa would, of course, be considered extremely simple, according to the modern standard, but it was in many places positively extravagant in proportion to their limited earning capacity.¹¹⁵

To sum up the forgoing discussion of the wastefulness of the Tokugawa feudalism. Peace and luxury led the peasants to spend, and the same condition, added to the peculiar feudal arrangement of the period, impelled the warriors more and more to absorb, the wealth of the nation that, owing to the exclusion of foreign trade and to the inadequate economic organisation of society, could not be increased correspondingly, and did in many instances diminish. We shall discuss briefly how these conditions influenced the system of taxation, and how the latter reacted upon the life of the village.

The taxation of the Tokugawa period clearly reflects the important characteristics of its feudal system. The separation of the warrior from land had resulted in the peasant's financial obligations acquiring the general appearance of being public taxes to the government, rather than personal dues to the lord. The State as a whole was largely feudal, but smaller districts were more bureaucratic than feudal, and it is here that one has to discover the working of the system of taxation. There was very little in the whole system that savored of obligations due directly from the peasant to the lord. There were no banalities; whatever *corvée* originated in the personal relationship had become overshadowed by or incorporated into the *corvée* for the public; the peasant had no opportunity to entertain the lord at his own house, and was explicitly forbidden to entertain his agents; and confiscations of land were rare and meant merely changes of cultivators.

The principal tax was the land-tax, levied, as has been said,⁹⁵ not upon each peasant as an individual person, but on the officially determined productive capacity of each holding. From the purely fiscal point of view, the peasant would be

considered an instrument to make the holding continue to yield what it should.

The Tokugawa inherited this system from the earlier feudal ages, which in their turn had accepted, though with serious changes, the Chinese notion of land-tax adopted in Japan in the seventh century. We are unable here to trace the interesting evolution of this tax in Japanese history, but the following data would be necessary for an understanding of the Tokugawa system. The land-tax was originally, when it was copied from China, a capitation-tax, paid by the head of each family as a unit, but assessed on the basis of the equal pieces of land allotted to all the peasants in the family above five years of age. From thus being a personal imposition levied through the family, the tax changed, during the transitional and the first feudal periods, into a tax still levied through the family (now nearly identical with the house)⁵¹ but assessed on its land-holdings. From this point on, this fundamental nature of the tax remained constant, but the method of its assessment, which had been made uncertain at the aforesaid change in the nature of the tax, gradually tended to become uniform and definite. At length, under Hideyoshi, at the end of the sixteenth century, the principle had been firmly established that the tax on each holding should be assessed at a certain rate upon the annual productive capacity measured and recorded in terms of hulled rice.⁹⁵

In the meantime, the ratio between the tax on land and its annual productivity, which in the eighth century was at most 5 per cent., had risen high during the thirteenth, due largely to the fact that the land-tax superseded other taxes, and then remained substantially the same till 1600 at 50 per cent. more or less. A strong tradition had grown up that the tax should not be raised much beyond this limit. Nor could this rate, high as it may seem, be considered extortionate from the point of view of the period. For, it should be remembered that, in the conception of the feudal lawyer, the peasant was the virtual but not the theoretical owner³⁰ of the land he tilled, and his land-tax was rather a rent than a tax. Even as a rent, the rate could not be said to have been always excessive. When, after the fall of the feudal government, a complete survey of the cultivated area of Japan was made between 1873 and 1881, it was discovered that an

annual tax of 3 % of the average assessed value of agricultural land would give a sum equal to the land-tax levied under the feudal rule.⁹⁶

In 1600, when the Tokugawa came to power, they accepted in general the current method of assessing the productivity of land and the prevalent tax-rate, and modified and elaborated them with their characteristic care. While they were in no position to initiate a much lower rate of taxation, they showed an unmistakable disposition to lighten the burden of the peasant by various devices, some of which follow.

(1) The annual productive power of each land-holding was measured with scrupulous care, and determined usually a little below its actual capacity.⁹⁷ What was more, there was a constant tendency to make the tax-rate itself definitely fixed beyond the caprice of the collector. This rate, even including the minor levies⁹⁸ connected with the main tax, was, at least in the domain land, often below 50 %.⁹⁹ The assessment was probably at the time considered as not unreasonable. The apparent iniquity of the feudal tax arose, not so much from its rates, as from the method of its collection, and from the too infrequent revision of the recorded productivity of the holdings. The former of these difficulties will be discussed in the Notes^{102 & 103}. As regards the latter, the probably complete records made during the first half of the seventeenth century, and the confessedly partial revision of the early eighteenth century, seem to have remained unaltered except in cases of urgent need. It is easy to see that both the area and the productivity of most pieces of land must have changed much during the more than two centuries of the régime. That such was the case was abundantly proved during the recent survey just referred to.¹⁰⁰

(2) The Tokugawa government allowed a greater freedom than in the earlier period of partially commuting the land-tax into money. Local customs varied on this point, but frequently as much as half the tax was thus paid in money.¹⁰¹ That this was an important gain for the peasant will be seen when we note that the village was held responsible for the collection¹⁰² of the tax, and for its transportation, either to Edo, if the village was situated in a domain land, or to the lord's store-houses, if it formed a part of a fief.¹⁰³ This burden remained oppressive, for no region was permitted to commute

all its taxes into money, but the burden would have been greater but for the limited commutation allowed.

(3) The old system of remitting taxes for special reasons was minutely elaborated under the Tokugawa. Remissions partial or entire, temporary or permanent, were granted to wood and waste land, land reserved for public purposes, newly tilled land, land once recorded but long since non-existent, land wasted by natural calamities, and the like.¹⁰⁴ In this connection may also be mentioned the loans of seed-rice and rice for food issued by the authorities in bad years.¹⁰⁵

In fact, the land-tax could not, from its very nature and from the strength of the customary law, be increased beyond, say, 60 per cent., at most, of the estimated productivity of the soil. There were other items of taxation, however, which could be and were, especially in fiefs, expanded almost indefinitely. These were: *corvées*, sundry customary taxes, and special taxes on products and occupations. Generally speaking, all the three kinds of taxes were apt to be more uniform in the domain land than in the fief, and, within the latter, in the baron's own land than in the land granted to the vassal.

The *corvées* were of two different kinds: labor for the baron or his vassal, whichever it may be, who had the superior right over the land in which the peasant lived, and labor for the public. The former was rendered in repairing the fences and thatched roofs of the lord's buildings, transporting his wood for fuel, and the like; the latter consisted mainly in repairing roads, bridges and other public works. The *corvées* were levied either on the holding in land or on the adult peasant, and were often commuted in money. They were sometimes, in the first part of the period, partially paid for, and the expenses for extraordinary public works, as, for example, after a flood or an earthquake, continued to be supplied by the authorities. The general tendency in the fiefs was, however, toward a gradual increase of the imposition of unpaid labor. In 1616, the *corvée* in the Akita fief was 236 day-men per 100 *koku*; in 1845, it was in the Sendai fief as high as 6000 or more day-men. In 1799, the Mito fief employed nearly two million day-men out of the peasant population of two hundred thousand.¹⁰⁶ These figures do not include the poorly paid service of the post-horse system, which proved a great burden to peasants near the high roads.¹⁰⁷

Of the customary taxes, some, as, for example, straw, bran, hay, and wood for fuel, seem originally to have been used, at least in part, in connection with the *corvée* for the lord, but were later commuted into rice and money, and became independent dues. There were several other taxes, including dues for the baron's groceries, for the bait for his hawks and fodder for his horses, for the performance of Shinto ritual services at Ise, and the like, which, beginning as incidental or local dues, became customary and universal within the fief. The villages of the domain lands paid fixed taxes whose issues were intended for the maintenance of the post-horse system, of the officials in charge over the suzerain's store-houses in Edo, and of men employed in his kitchen, all levied on the peasant holdings. On the same basis were imposed, in both domain lands and fiefs, dues paid in beans, a kind of sesame, millet, and glutinous rice, as well as those levied nominally on certain domesticated plants, on the use of grass on wasteland and of ponds and rivers, and many other items. These taxes would be considerable in the aggregate, even if each was small and did not increase, but in many a fief some of them were neither small nor fixed. At Mito, for instance, the bean, sesame, and millet taxes alone amounted to nearly 10 per cent. of the recorded annual productivity of land; at Akita, the bran, straw, and hay taxes, converted into money, increased from 4.8 lbs. of silver per 100 *koku* of the productive value of the holding about 1650 to 32.3 lbs. about 1860. These were conspicuous, but not extreme, examples. Perhaps not the least objectionable feature of the customary taxes was that frequently they were collected by officials specially despatched to the villages at a time when the latter had already paid their annual land-tax and were again almost as poor as before the harvest. The fear that the main tax might suffer if the customary dues were collected at the same time with it was so great that the latter were usually preceded by the former. Nor were they always consolidated, as they sometimes were, to a large saving of the expense of collection. Commuting in money was not always a blessing, for the rates would be unfavorable, particularly when the taxes had been, as they often were, farmed out to private collectors.¹⁰⁸

The evils of farming were probably more frequent with the taxes on various secondary occupations and products other

than the grains. These dues were extremely numerous in every fief or domain land. They did not always fall directly on the farmers, but nevertheless redounded to them in the form of increased prices of articles. As we come nearer the end of the period, especially after 1800, we see barons' governments recklessly multiplying the kinds of taxes of this class.¹⁰⁹

Over and above these multifarious taxes, there were expenses of the village administration to be borne, including the salaries of village-officials, repairs of the public works of the village, cost of policing the village against fire and robbery, of entertaining visiting officials, of making petitions, and the like. They were levied either on the holding, on the individual peasant, or on each peasant family. They were at first almost negligible, and, in the suzerain's domains, where the accounts of the village were to be open to the inspection of the peasant, continued to be comparatively light. In some fiefs, however, it was not uncommon that, owing to the venality of village and higher officials, the village expenses equalled or exceeded the total amount of taxes for the fiefs.¹¹⁰

That the bribery of the officials was a frequent and serious evil is reflected in the continuous repetition of the instructions issued to them on this point and in the persistent order to the peasants to impeach corrupt officials. Unfortunately, however, there was every temptation for corrupt practices to grow up between the feared but ill-paid official on the one hand and the passive and blindly self-interested peasant on the other. For a considerate though illegal act of an official at the assessment or collection of a tax, a farmer would be induced to entertain him at his house, to bribe him, to sell him things at a nominal cost, or to borrow from him at usurious rates. Examples of self-denying rural administrators were not wanting, but more frequently both people and officials came to regard taxation as a field for secret dealings and understandings.¹¹¹ These easily escaped the notice of special supervisors that the suzerain and the baron occasionally sent in circuit about villages,¹¹² and continued to raise the expenses of the peasant.

Moreover, it should be noted that, both the suzerain and the baron ordered special irregular requisitions in addition to the regular taxes. Indeed, it was one of the suzerain's favorite methods of weakening the barons to impose requisitions upon the fiefs for extraordinary needs, such as the building

and repairing of the temples at Nikkō and Edo and of the Imperial palace, his own journeys to Kyōto, the reception of foreign envoys, and, in the later years, the defense of the coast against European aggression. Besides these requisitions from Edo, which were borne ultimately by none but the tax-payers, the people of specially ill-governed fiefs were subjected to illegal and irregular exactions by warrior-officials, some of whom even went to the extent of collecting the next years' taxes in advance.¹¹³

All these numerous taxes—levied in so complex a manner on the peasant holdings, families and individuals, paid at so high rates in money, labor, rice and other products, and, above all, increased so continuously in many of their secondary items,—were, nevertheless, insufficient to meet the growing expenditures of the government.¹¹⁴ Still more unfortunately, when the tax-rates, originally high enough, were being raised, the productive power of the peasant family was, as will be remembered, already declining. If, in 1650, from his holding of 1 *chō* (2.45 acres) of rice-land, a peasant paid out of the average crop of 20 *koku* (about 100 bushels), 5 *koku* of the land-tax, 2 or 3 of the other taxes, and netted the remaining six-tenths of his income, he would, in 1800, be able to raise but 15 *koku* on the same land, while his land-tax and other dues had risen to 10 or more and village expenses absorbed at least 5. He had become a mere tool to move the spade.¹¹⁵ How was he to provide for his farming implements, horse and harness, incidental expenses, irregular imposts, sickness, and calamity? Where was the money to buy the very manure? This last question was serious, for although, it is true, the Japanese peasant was fortunate in being able to rely so largely on human labor and human manure, it was none the less becoming more and more difficult to go without buying other manure, as new land was tilled, rotations of crops were discarded, and the farming was growing yearly more intensive.¹¹⁶ When the farmer wished to borrow, he had to submit to rates of interest as high as 25 or 30 per cent. per annum, so that, it was said about 1720, a debt of five *ryō* would ruin his family in five years.¹¹⁷ That the average peasant did subsist despite these alarming conditions was due to the sundry crops of cereals and vegetables he was obliged to raise, and to such subsidiary industries, including the silk-culture, as he was

compelled to pursue.¹¹⁸ These, of course, if they brought to him the needed income, also made his otherwise arduous life toilsome to the extreme.¹¹⁹ Signs of his weariness, both material and moral, are visible from the early years of the régime, and continued to multiply through the period.¹²⁰ Conservative as he naturally was, his fortune altered and his land changed hands with much ease.¹²¹

One will now be able to appreciate the deeper significance of those minute measures of economic and moral paternalism of the feudal authorities which were discussed earlier in this paper. It was by dint of these measures that the meagre prosperity of the peasant might be maintained at all. The government was not, however, content with negative orders alone, but also eagerly encouraged the tilling of new land, putting restrictions only where they were necessary,¹²² and, it must be admitted, succeeded in making the acreage of cultivated land probably twice as large at the end of the period as at the beginning.¹²³ It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this great fact, and yet it was not a pure gain to the peasant. The consequent decrease of waste-land deprived him much of the manure which Nature had afforded in the form of decayed hay, while at the same time more manure than before was needed in his increasingly intensive farming.¹¹⁶ Also, enlarged crops of rice throughout Japan tended, except in years of famine, to check the price of this cereal, which the farmer sold, from advancing in proportion to the continual adulteration of coins and rise of prices of other things, which he bought.¹²⁴ Unfortunately, too, there was little outside market to which surplus rice could be exported, for Japan's door was closed almost totally against foreign trade. Nor should it be forgotten that so long as the principal form of agricultural labor remained manual, the very limit of the working capacity made an indefinite expansion of the cultivated area a physical impossibility. Small as was the average landed estate in Japan, it seemed in general to have been even too large for the holding peasant to manage.¹²⁵ It is highly interesting to see that this fundamental condition served to make Japan persist as a country of essentially small farming, in spite of the universal need for more wealth. This condition not only tended to limit the size of the estate of the average peasant, but also, together with the taxes too

high in relation to the rent, made it an unprofitable investment for the rich to enlarge their landed properties.¹²⁶ This natural equilibrium was only the more strongly insured by the restrictions imposed by law upon the alienation of land.

The selling and mortgaging of land was, indeed, a necessity for the penurious peasant. The authorities, in their anxiety to prevent aggrandisement by the rich few, forbade a permanent sale of old land, and restricted mortgage.¹²⁷ However, "without free sale of land," wrote Tanaka Kyūgu, about 1720, "what province or what district, whether in a fief or in a domain land, would be able to pay all its taxes?" Mortgages often meant permanent transfers, and always were attended with high rates of interest. Hence, illicit or specially permitted sales were effected under all conceivable devices to elude the law.³⁶ It should not be imagined, however, that the peasant cheerfully parted with his hereditary holdings of land. On the contrary, few things were done more reluctantly than this extreme measure, which deprived the farmer of the only material basis of his humble status, lowered him in the eyes of his neighbours, and disgraced him in the memory of his ancestors. Thus the peasant struggled on between his family pride and his penury, and between the restrictions of sale and mortgage and the forced necessity of modest livelihood. The general tendency among the rural population was not towards a greater inequality, but towards a continual change of fortune within limited bounds.

The loss of the peasant estate was liable to be followed by more regrettable circumstances. While the poor peasant might be hired by a more fortunate neighbour as farm-hand, he oftener chose to migrate to a city and take service under a warrior or a merchant, for it would give him a higher wage with less labor than on the farm. When he returned, he would have acquired the speculative point of view and the extravagant habits that ruled in the larger cities. He thus carried about him a certain restless and flippant air, and the half-exhausted inhabitants of the village contained elements susceptible exactly to this sort of influence. Soon every part of the country came to feel a longing for easy money and easy life. From the end of the seventeenth century, the supply even for menial service in the warrior's or merchant's household was growing

scarce. In order to remedy this difficulty, the authorities, who in the earlier years had taken great pains to forbid sales of persons and to limit the terms of personal service, were now obliged to modify the law to a considerable extent.¹²⁸ Every district, if not every village, contained landless persons who would live rather by speculation, trading on popular superstitions, contracts, gambling, fraud, or robbery, than any from of honest labor.¹²⁹ Especially, provinces near Edo were infested with the most desperate classes of brigands.¹³⁰

These dangerous elements in the rural population made themselves felt in years of famine. They led or joined discontented peasants, hundreds or thousands of whom would rise in mobs, as it often happened in different parts of Japan, and everywhere in 1787—8, and destroy and rob merchants' establishments and demand radical changes of prices. As was characteristic with uneducated peasants, they were on these occasions extremely foolhardy, coarse and cruel, but, when confronted with strong armed forces, broke down abruptly.¹³¹ It was in order to prevent these events that good rulers filled public granaries in ordinary years, and in famines opened them and fed poor peasants on generous scales.¹³² A success of these measures was always considered a mark of wise rural administration, for it was tacitly understood that the people should not be expected to be able to provide for their own needs in hard years.

Riots took place only at unusual times. What was of continual occurrence in all parts of Japan from the beginning to the end of the Tokugawa period was the desertion of the impoverished peasant of his ancestral home and hamlet. In ordinary years, the estate of the runaway would be cultivated and its taxes paid by his relatives or village,^{33, 40} but at every slight increase of hardship such large numbers would abscond that, despite the rigorous laws of the joint responsibility of the village, much cultivated land would be laid waste, or at best be thrust into unwilling hands and decline in productivity. A literal enforcement of law would only increase the number of runaways. Nothing is more significant of the rural government under the Tokugawa than this subject of the desertion of the peasant.¹³³

The peasant wishing to run away was apt to find a ready solution of his problem in the multiplicity of land tenures that

prevailed in feudal Japan. There were, besides the estates of civil nobles and of religious institutions, the suzerain's domain lands, the baron's fiefs, and lands apportioned to some of their vassals, with a great diversity of financial laws and customs.¹³⁴ The deserter from a fief might pass into a domain land, as it often took place, or the reverse. He might also pass from the baron's own land to land held by one of his vassals. It was not uncommon that a vassal's land was situated adjacent to, or even in the same village with, a holding of his lord. A destitute peasant in the latter would either in some manner transfer the title over what little patches of land still remained in his hands to a person in the vassal's territory, preferably to its manager, who was generally regarded one of the most sinful of all men, or else himself move into the territory. The process of removal might also be reversed, according to the circumstance.

One remarkable fact in the economic history of this period is the apparently slow increase of population beside a great extension of the area of cultivated land. The latter increased from perhaps 5000000 in 1600 to more than 11500000 acres at the end of the régime,¹²³ while the former rose from 26060000 in 1721 to only 26900000 in 1847.¹³⁵ Allowing for the probable inexactness of the official statistics,¹³⁶ it is worthy of note that, after the middle of the eighteenth century down to 1867, cases of considerable increase of population in the provinces are rarely met with.¹³⁷ Evidently the terrible famines which visited Japan repeatedly at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century decimated the people.¹³⁸ For under no condition would an isolated agricultural community be so helpless as under a universal failure of crops and famine. Yet it is striking that the nation should have been so slow, as it was, to recuperate. The successive famines reducing the population raised the wages, it was complained, but the natural equilibrium which should be expected did not follow. In a few fiefs, the population slowly increased between the famines and the end of the period, but their taxable population actually decreased.¹³⁹ An explanation would suggest itself that it was the small land-holding peasantry, rather than the total population, that did not increase. It has already been shown that circumstances led peasants in many places to have recourse to illicit

sales and mortgages, to menial service to the merchant and warrior classes, to irregular modes of life, and to desertion. Not a few turned peddlers and petty merchants, much against the policy of the government,⁷⁰ and thereby created more intermediate steps between the producer and consumer, raising prices and producing nothing.

There were not absent certain forces that counteracted the tendency of the taxable population to remain stationary. Among these may be mentioned the conscious measures adopted in many districts to increase their peasant population, either by generally good administration, by forbidding infanticide and giving bounties for births, by inducing people of other classes and districts to settle down as farmers, or by encouraging the opening of hitherto uncultivated land.¹⁴⁰ Besides, the laws restricting changes of residence and sales of land, the high taxes of land discouraging aggrandisement by the rich, the general economic conditions still too little advanced to make the comparative disadvantage of the agricultural occupation overwhelming, and, also, the tenacious family institutions breeding conservative views of life,—these circumstances, too, must have tended to make the peasant think twice before abandoning his status. In the main, however, nothing could resist the two mighty forces that silently but surely carried the régime to its destiny. The first was the fundamental question of land *versus* population. If the average rice-land, such as formed the basis of taxation under the Tokugawa, was capable of supporting the population at the rate of one person on every one and a quarter acres,¹⁴¹ it would have taken thirty million acres, instead of the five to eleven and a half millions of the cultivated area during this period,¹²³ to maintain Japan's rural population of about twenty-four million souls. The actual rate was only one half acre per head.¹⁴² It is true that potatoes, oranges, grapes, cotton, and a few other crops more valuable than rice were raised in some districts, but these were, except the first, purely local, and their cultivation was generally not allowed to encroach upon that of rice. It is also true that the government was alive to the danger of over-population, and forbade indefinite divisions of estates,^{36 & 45} but this measure created undesirable social conditions among the younger sons of the peasant.¹⁴³ It must be admitted, too, that the peasant family could and

usually did undertake the silk-culture and other secondary occupations, and, indeed, these were the saving elements of the rural life. Nevertheless, one can hardly avoid the general conclusion that the Japan under the Tokugawa contained a population as large, if not too large, as could be supported by her intensive agriculture.

The second fundamental question was the productive power of the soil *versus* the expenditures of the government, the latter increasing and the former relatively decreasing though perhaps absolutely increasing.¹⁴⁴ The economics of the nation were inadequate to support the finances of the State. One has but to remember with what unceasing effort, though with ultimate failure, the paternal rulers strove to bridge the widening gap with the labor of the peasant, whom they caressed, exhorted, threatened, and wearied.

In conclusion, let us, from the historical point of view, suggest a few other lines of criticism of the régime than have already been touched upon. One may attempt to judge the merit of a movement by comparing its final results with its original objects. Ask, therefore, if the ingenious and elaborate polity of the Tokugawa, so far as it concerned village administration, succeeded in attaining its primary object: namely, to secure the submission and the contentment of the peasant population to a degree that it would cheerfully and without friction contribute the fruits of its labor to the maintenance of the warrior class, and to the perpetuation of the power of the Tokugawa.

To this general question no impartial student would hesitate to return an affirmative answer. It was nothing short of genius in statesmanship that wove the great fabric of the Tokugawa government; it completely overwhelmed the lawless elements of which the Japan of the seventeenth century was full, and continued without serious interruptions to exercise an almost absolute control over national affairs during the rule of fifteen successive suzerains. The profound peace thus brought about enabled a large part of Japan's arable land to be turned to cultivation, numerous arts and industries to be built up, and a highly diversified civilization to be developed

and diffused among the people. If this wonderful régime failed to prevent the rise of certain evils, they would be found to have been largely due to the fact that the government was essentially feudal, and that it had to be built upon the existing conditions of the family and society. Nor did the evils harm any one so much as they did the suzerain's own government.

It would, however, be unjust to ignore the evils, even if we lay aside the question how much they were within the moral control of the suzerain. They were many, and some of them have been of immense magnitude. To be brief. Just as the suzerain's policy toward the feudal classes had subdued them at the cost of their true vigor and their genuine loyalty to himself, so his control of the peasants stifled their enterprise, limited their wealth, and levelled down their conditions. If they did not rise in a general revolt, it was because they were thoroughly deprived of not only the opportunity, but also the energy, to protest. When at last the national crisis came in the middle of the nineteenth century, just as the feudal classes chose to make no serious effort to defend the waning power of the Tokugawa, but, on the contrary, furnished men to efface it, so the peasants, also, proved surprisingly indifferent. The great Revolution was begun and consummated by discontented warriors, with the rural population too weary and too meak to lift a finger in the cause of their own liberation. It has been said that the great reform was accomplished without a drop of the peasants's blood being shed, but the fact does not reflect honor upon them. They are still largely passive under the new rights¹⁴⁵ that have been heaped upon them. What has been training them since the Revolution is not so much their new political power, for as yet hardly one in every forty farmers has a vote,¹⁴⁶ as the national system of education, their amalgamation with the other classes of society, which is growing apace, and the object lessons in public interest taught by the stirring events that have transpired about them in the East.

If, however, the peasant has emerged from the feudal régime with little added wealth and energy, he has also inherited from it two important legacies: a moderate but secure holding in land, and a wonderful capacity for discipline. These are the great material and moral debts of the new age to the old. History will probably tell of what immense value the heritage has been for the upbuilding of a steady and collected nation.

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85. *Shū-gi wa-sho*, 集義和書, [notes on philosophy, ethics, and politics], by Kumazawa Ban-zan, 熊澤蕃山 (1619—91). 16 bks. In the *Ni-hon rin-ri i-hen* 日本倫理彙編 series, (10 vols., Tokyo, 1901—03), I, 255—600.

86. *Shū-gi gwai-sho*, 集義外書, [sequel to the above], by the same author. 16 bks. In the same series, II. 9—332.

87. *Min-kan sei-yō*, 民間省要, [notes on rural administration], by Tanaka Kyūgu-emon Nobuyoshi? 田中休愚右衛門喜吉. Prefaces dated 1720 and 1721. Manuscript. 2 series, 7 and 8 vols. (o. s.)

Fearless criticisms by a practical administrator of the rural government of domain lands. The work attracted the attention of the wise suzerain Yoshimune, who gradually raised the author to the position of intendant. See *To*, XIII. 962, XIV. 278.

88. *Kei-zai roku*, 經濟錄, [views on government], by Dazai Shun-dai, 太宰春臺 (1680—1747), 1729. Manuscript. 10 vols. (o. s.)

Thoroughly Confucian.

89. *Shun-dai zatsu-wa*, 駿臺雜話, [miscellaneous notes on history, morals, and literature], by Muro Kyū-sō, 室鳩巢 (1658—1734), 1732. 5 bks. In the *Ni-hon rin-ri i-hen* series, VII. 81—309.

90. *Sō-bō ki-gen*, 草茅危言, [political and social criticisms], by Nakai Chiku-zan, 中井竹山 (1730—1804), 1789. Kyōto, 1868. 5 vols., 280 leaves.

91. *Byō-kan chō-go*, 病間長語, [miscellaneous notes], by Inoue Kin-ga, 井上金峨 (1733—84). In the *On-chi sō-sho* series, XI, 70 pages.

92. *Ama no taku mo*, 蜚の焼く藻, [miscellaneous notes], by Morikawa Takamori 森川孝盛, c. 1790. In the same series, XI, 122 pages.

93. *Ō-mei-kwan i-sō*, 嚶鳴館遺草, posthumous ethico-political works by Hosoi Hei-shū, once tutor to Uesugi Harunori and other barons, (1728—1801). 6 bks. In the *Ni-hon rin-ri i-hen* series, IX. 9—161.

Good examples of the great influence of Confucian ideas on rural government.

94. *Hō-toku gwai-roku*, 報德外錄, views by Ninomiya Takanori (Son-toku), 二宮尊德 (1786—1856), compiled by his pupil Saitō Takayuki, 齋藤高行. 2 bks. In the same series, X. 397—439.

95. *Ninomiya sen-sei go-rui*. 二宮先生語類, sayings of Ninomiya Takanori, compiled by the same pupil. 4 bks. In the same series, X. 440—542.

96. *Chi-so ron*, 地租論, [on the land-tax and its relation to the life of the peasantry], by the late Fukuzawa Yukichi, 福澤諭吉, about 1893. In the *Fukuzawa Yukichi zen-shū* (全集), V.

97. *Hō-sei ron-san*, 法制論纂, [seventy-eight essays and addresses on the institutional history of Japan by various scholars], edited by the Koku-gaku-in, 國學院. Tokyo, 1903. 1 vol., 1446 pages.

98. *Hō-sei ron-san zoku-hen* (續編), [sequel to the above, containing fifty-seven more essays and addresses], edited by the same. Tokyo, 1904. 1 vol., 914 pages.

99. *Tokugawa sei-kyō kō*, 德川政教考, [evolution of political-philosophical ideas during the Tokugawa period], by Prof. Yoshida Tō-go, 吉田東伍. Tokyo, 1894. 2 vols., 206, 212 pages.

100. *Dai Ni-hon chi-mei zhi-sho*, 大日本地名辭書, dictionary of Japanese historical geography], by the same author. Tokyo, 1900—07. 4 vols., cxxxiv + 288 + 4752 pages.

101. *Koku-shi dai zhi-ten*, 國史大辭典, [dictionary of Japanese history], by Yashiro Kuniji?, 八代國治, Hayakawa Zhunzaburō, 早川純三郎, and Inobe Shigewo, 井野邊茂雄. Tokyo, 1908. 2 vols., 2390 and 220 pages.

102. *Shi-gaku zasshi*, 史學雜誌, [monthly journal devoted to history]. Tokyo, 1890—.

Abbreviations.

The following abbreviations are used in the Notes for those works which receive frequent reference. Two capitals, (for example, 'BR'), are used for each old work which consists primarily of sources; a capital and a small letter, (for example, 'Mi'), for each old secondary authority; three capitals, (for example, 'DSR'), for each recent work consisting mainly of sources; and a capital and two small letters, (for example, 'Hrs'), for each recent secondary authority.

AI	81. AIDZU KYŪ-ZHIZAK-KŌ BASSUI.	Ggs	60a. Go-nin-gumi sei-do.
BG	55. BAN-SHŪ GO KWAI-MAI	Gi	70. Gin-dai i-zhi.
BK	66. BI-HAN TEN-KEI.	GK	35. GO KATTE-GATA O SADAME-GAKI.
Bms	6. Baku-matsu shi.	GS	65. GUN-CHŪ SEI-HŌ.
BO	54. BAN-SHŪ . . . OSAME-HARAI	Gsr	79. Gei-han san-zhū-san nen roku.
BR	67. BI-HAN TEN-ROKU.	GT	29. GO TŌ-KE REI-JŌ.
Chk	58. Chi-so kai-sei hō-koku sho.	Hmg	80. Hiroshima mō-gyū.
Chr	96. Chi-so ron.	Hrs	97. Hō-sei ron-san.
Dch	100. Dai Ni-hon chi-mei zhi-sho.	Hrz	98. Hō-sei ron-san zoku-hen.
De	47. Den-en rui-setsu.	Ht	94. Hō-toku gwai-roku.
DKM	1. DAI NI-HON KŌ-MON-ZHO.	JG	52. JI-KATA-GAKARI A-TSUKAI-HO SHŪ-SEI.
DNR	7. DAI NI-HON NŌ-SEI RUI-HEN.	Jh	48. Ji-kata han-rei roku.
DNS	8. DAI NI-HON NŌ SHI.	JK	33. JI-KATA KŌ-SAI RO-KU.
Dns	44. Dai Ni-hon so-zei shi.	Jk	51. Ji-kata kō-shō roku.
DO	83. DAI-ZEN ONKE-MI....	Jo	49. Ji-kata ochi-bo shū.
Dse	45. Den-so en-kaku yō-ki.	Jt	50. Ji-kata tai-gai shū.
Dsg	10. Dai Ni-hon san-gyō zhi-seki.	KB	23. KEN-PŌ BU RUI.
DSH	46. DEN-SEI HEN.	KH	41. KWA-HEI HI-ROKU.
DSR	2. DAI NI-HON SHI-RYŌ.	KK	20. KEN-KYŌ RUI-TEN.
En	69. En-kyō fū-setsu roku.	KKK	78. KWAI-KYŪ KI-ZHI.
Eta	77. Egawa Tan-an.	Km	18. Kei-zai mon-dō hi-roku.
Fuk	59. Fu-Ken chi-so kai-sei ki-yō.	KR	22. KWA - JŌ RUI - TEN HON-MON.
GGI	61. GO-NIN-GUMI CHŌ I-DŌ BEN.	KRE	11. KO-ZHI RUI-EN.
Ggk	60. Go-nin-gumi sei-do no ki-gen.	Ksd	101. Koku-shi dai zhi-ten.
		Kw	16. Kwan-nō waku-mon.
		KY	28. KU - ZHI - KATA YŌ-REI.
		Kz	88. Kei-zai roku.
		Mi	87. Min-kan sei-yō.
		MK	62. MURA SHŌ-YA KYOTO.

Mkr	37. Min-zhi kwan-rei rui-shū.	Shr	76. Shirakawa Raku-ō kō
MO	63. MURA SHŌ-YA OSAKA.	Shz	102. Shi-gaku zasshi.
Ng	12. Nō-gyō zen-sho.	Smw	19. Simmons-Wigmore, Notes
Ngh	14. Nō-gyō hon-ron.	Sw	85. Shū-gi wa-sho.
Nn	95. Ninomiya sen-sei go-rui.	Tbf	5. Tokugawa baku-fu zhi-dai shi.
Nns	9. Ni-hon nō-gyō shō-shi.	Tk	15. Tokugawa baku-fu ken-ji yō-ryaku.
NTK	72. NOZOKI TAI-KWA Ō.	TKR	21. TOKUGAWA KIN-REI KO.
Ny	13. Nō-gyō yo-wa.	TMK	36. TOKUGAWA MIN-ZHI KWAN-REI SHŪ. z zhin-zhi hen, d dō-san hen, f fu-dō-san hen, s so-shō hen.
Nz	17. Nō-sei za-yū.	Tnk	68. Tsugaru Nobumasa kō.
OK	82. ON KE-MI TE-TSU-DZUKI.	To	3. Tokugawa zhikki.
Om	93. Ō-mei-kwan i-sō.	Tsk	99. Tokugawa sei-kyō kō.
OO	64. Ō-SHŌ-YA ŌSAKA.	Tt	56. Ta-hata ken-mi
OT	53. ON TORI-KA KOKO-RO-E GAKI.	US	73. U-YŌ SŌ-SHO.
RD	26. RITSU-REI DAI HI-ROKU.	Uyz	74. Uesugi Yō-zan kō.
RH	24. RUI-REI HI-ROKU.	Wa	57. Wata ken-mi
RR	32. RITSU-REI ROKU.	Wig	38. Wigmore, Materials
Sb	90. Sō-bō ki-gen.	YZS	71. YŌ-ZAN KŌ SEI-KI.
SCR	39. SUI-CHIN ROKU.	Zo	4. Zoku Tokugawa zhikki.
SCY	40. SUI-CHIN YO-ROKU.		
Sd	89. Shun-dai zatsu-wa.		
SDS	84. SEN-DAI HAN SO-ZEI YŌ-RYAKU.		
Sg	86. Shū-gi gwai-sho.		

(Note: The Notes accompanying this article will appear in a subsequent number of the Journal.)